

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6 9 and 10 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended. Claims 5, 7, 8 and 11-14 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in those claims. The amendments introduce no new matter. A Request for Continued Examination is attached. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 1, reiterates that the Restriction Requirement is made final. As such, claims 11-14 are provisionally withdrawn from consideration as drawn to a non-elected group of claims. Claims 11-14 are canceled.

The Office Action, in paragraph 3, rejects claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by what is alleged to be Applicants' admitted prior art. The Office Action, in paragraph 4, rejects claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,524,430 to Mazeaud et al. (hereinafter "Mazeaud"). The Office Action, in paragraph 5, rejects claim 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,899,882 to Parker. The Office Action, in paragraph 7, rejects claim 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over what is again alleged to be Applicants' admitted prior art, or any of the above applied prior art references in view of what is alleged to be Applicants' admitted prior art and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,343,355 to Goloff et al. (hereinafter "Goloff"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 is amended to incorporation, among other features, the subject matter recited in now canceled claims 5, 7 and 8. Because none of the above rejections rejects the subject matter of claims 7 and 8, claim 1, as amended, is allowable at least over all of the above combinations of prior art rejections. Further, claims 2-4 and 6 are also allowable over at least any of the combinations of applied references for at least their respective

dependence on independent claim 1, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

The Office Action, in paragraph 8 rejects claims 7-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over any of the above applied prior art references and further in view of U.S. Patents Nos. 3,866,735 to Irwin, 4,700,544 to Fucci and/or 6,681,577 to Bolender et al. (hereinafter "Bolender"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The cancellation of claims 7 and 8 would render this rejection moot as to these claims except based on the inclusion of this subject matter in amendment to claim 1, Applicants offer the following.

The Office Action concedes that any combination of the above listed prior art references do not teach the uses of tabs projecting from the flange nor their ranges. Rather, the Office Action asserts, however, that each of Irwin, Fucci, and Bolender can be relied upon as indicating that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to employ tabs for the flanges. Applicants previously argued that none of Irwin, Fucci, or Bolender teach tabs that can reasonably be considered to functionally and/or structurally correspond to the tabs of claim 7. This argument is not even addressed in the current Office Action.

Claim 1 recites, among other features, at least one tab that projects on the outer edge of said flange and is welded to the combustor wall in a region of low stress concentration along the outer edge of the at least one tab such that the at least one tab provides a guide for the location and length of the weld. None of Irwin, Fucci, or Bolender, even to the extent that they can be relied upon as teaching tabs, can reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, the specific features regarding the tabs as positively recited in the pending claims.

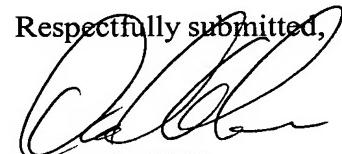
For at least the above reasons claim 1, as amended, is not rendered obvious by any permissible combination of the applied prior art references. Additionally, claims 2-4, 6, 9 and 10 are also patentable over any permissible combination of the applied prior art references for

at least the respective dependence of these claims on an allowable independent claim 1, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the pending claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and/or §103(a) as being anticipated by, or unpatentable over, any permissible combination of the applied prior art reference are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-4, 6, 9 and 10 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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